

# **PUBLIC COMMENT REPORT**

2024-2027 TIP – Regionally Significant Project Additions

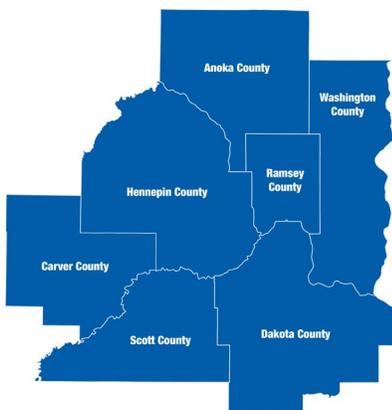
November 2023

The Council's mission is to foster efficient and economic growth for a prosperous metropolitan region

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The Metropolitan Council is the regional planning organization for the seven-county Twin Cities area. The Council operates the regional bus and rail system, collects and treats wastewater, coordinates regional water resources, plans and helps fund regional parks, and administers federal funds that provide housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income individuals and families. The 17-member Council board is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the governor.

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## Background

The Metropolitan Council accepted comments on amending the region's 2022-2027 TIP. Public comments were accepted from October 19, 2023, to November 8, 2023. The requested amendment would add to the TIP:

- I-94 Albertville to Monticello lane addition in Wright County and
- US 169/CSAH 59 new interchange in Scott County

The Council received a total of 24 comments. This includes 10 supportive comments (all specifically in favor of the I-94 expansion and three specifically in favor of the US 169 interchange) along with one comment supporting the I-94 expansion with suggested project expansion. Thirteen people expressed opposition to the projects (all specifically opposed to the I-94 expansion and three specifically opposed to the US 169 interchange). Three comments included commentary not directly related to the amendment request.

As part of the overlapping TPP amendment public comment period, 18 individuals were supportive of the I-94 and/or US 169 interchange projects and 5 were generally opposed to any highway mobility project. Additional details are documented in the TPP public comment report.

The following report includes a table of comments received and responses from Met Council staff. Twenty-three commenters participated.

### People engaged

- Web page
  - 104 unique visitors
- Facebook Post
  - Impressions: 4,002
  - Reach: 3,961
  - Engagement: 292
- X (formerly Twitter) Post
  - Impressions: 857
  - Engagement: 27

### Methods used

- Web announcement and web page notice
- GovDelivery email announcement and reminder
- Facebook
- X (formerly Twitter)
- Public meeting (virtual)

### Comments received through:

- Email
- Online form

## Comments and Responses

The table below contains written comments as received, along with a response from Met Council staff.

Commenter	Topic	Comment	Response
Nathan Carlson	I-94 lane expansion	I oppose the I-94 lane expansion. Lane expansions do not resolve traffic issues in the long term. Lane expansions are expensive. Lane expansions are directly in opposition to MnDOT's own publicly stated goals:   1. ""Reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled across Minnesota per capita 14% by 2040."" 2. ""Decrease annual greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector by 80% by 2040.""  <a href="https://www.dot.state.mn.us/news/2023/01/23-statewide-adopts-statewide-multimodal.html">https://www.dot.state.mn.us/news/2023/01/23-statewide-adopts-statewide-multimodal.html</a>   Have our state representatives not made it clear that this type of project is in opposition to the interests of the people? This amendment gives further reason to distrust MnDOT and doubt its ability to serve the people of Minnesota.	<p>Thank you for your comment. The I-94 project (Albertville to Monticello) was one of eight projects funded through the Corridors of Commerce program in 2023. This program was established through the State Legislature in 2013 to foster economic growth through state highway projects. Funding for the last round of Corridors of Commerce was authorized by the Legislature in 2021 and 2023, for a total of \$380 million. The legislation directs MnDOT to administer the program based on the criteria established by the Legislature and then deliver the selected projects.</p> <p>At the same time, the Legislature passed language requiring capacity expansion projects to conduct a greenhouse gas emissions impact assessment goes into effect for projects starting in early 2025. Given the multi-year transportation project development process, this law was phased in to allow projects already being planned and programmed to be delivered.</p> <p>The Met Council has several ongoing and future projects aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions via electrification and the reduction of vehicle miles travelled. We expect to use new greenhouse gas emission measures to aid in Regional Solicitation project selection in future funding cycles. The Council also has new federal funding sources, including the Carbon Reduction Program and PROTECT, aimed at reducing emissions and making the transportation system more resilient.</p>
Michael J. Ostaffe	Both projects	I 110% support the added lane on I94 from Albertville to Monticello. Increasing traffic and increasing industrialization along the corridor requires that we begin work immediately to address current and looming traffic issues.  I also support Scott County in their request. They are paying for it, why should it be denied?	Thank you for your comment. We acknowledge your support of the projects. Regarding Scott County's locally funded project, the rationale for inclusion of this project in the amendment request is that construction of an interchange is considered a "regionally significant" project. Federal law (23 CFR 450.218(h)) requires that the TIP include any regionally significant project, regardless of funding source.
Gordy H. Moore	I-94 lane expansion	I would like to respectfully submit my opposition to MnDOT's request to expand I-94 between Albertville and Monticello. This request feels like a way to get around the excellent recently passed legislation around evaluating the effects of emissions that new highway/MnDOT projects may create. Further expanding 94 in this corridor will induce more traffic generally, spur more exurban, sprawling residential development, all leading to more climate-harming greenhouse gas emissions, not to mention noise pollution, locally worse air quality due to exhaust particulates, and particulate emissions from brakepad dust. I hope that the TAB will consider the longterm climate impacts that result from expanded highways and vote to deny this TIP amendment.	<p>Thank you for your comment. The I-94 project (Albertville to Monticello) was one of eight projects funded through the Corridors of Commerce program in 2023. This program was established through the State Legislature in 2013 to foster economic growth through state highway projects. Funding for the last round of Corridors of Commerce was authorized by the Legislature in 2021 and 2023, for a total of \$380 million. The legislation directs MnDOT to administer the program based on the criteria established by the Legislature and then deliver the selected projects.</p> <p>At the same time, the Legislature passed language requiring capacity expansion projects to conduct a greenhouse gas emissions impact assessment goes into effect for projects starting in early 2025. Given the multi-year transportation project development process, this law was phased in to allow projects already being planned and programmed to be delivered.</p> <p>The Met Council has several ongoing and future projects aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions via electrification and the reduction of vehicle miles travelled. We expect to use new greenhouse gas emission measures to aid in Regional Solicitation project selection in future funding cycles. The Council also has new federal funding sources, including the Carbon Reduction Program and PROTECT, aimed at reducing emissions and making the transportation system more resilient.</p>
Sarah Moore, Hennepin County Hospital	Transit	Why can't patients get on the bus by the end of the line where the layover is? Some patients just finished with their appointments. Are getting shots and finished with appointments do not want to walk five blocks to catch the bus.	Thank you for your comment. We do not believe this is connected to the two projects related to this action. We will pass this comment on to Metro Transit.
Fed up taxpayer	Adding lanes	Ah, no, don't you people understand that adding lanes only increases traffic? This is asinine and a waste of money.  Your not getting it and still stuck in the 1950's.	Thank you for your comment. The I-94 project (Albertville to Monticello) was one of eight projects funded through the Corridors of Commerce program in 2023. This program was established through the State Legislature in 2013 to foster economic growth through state highway projects. Funding for the last round of Corridors of Commerce was authorized by the Legislature in 2021 and 2023, for a total of \$380 million. The legislation directs MnDOT to administer the program based on the criteria established by the Legislature and then deliver the selected projects.

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Jason Zhang	I-94 lane expansion	There should not be a lane extension on I-94. This kind of solution does not work in the long run, especially given that the expansion of highways often leads to induced demand and a degradation of service in addition to increased maintenance costs. We need solutions that can better scale up in the long run- dedicated transit lanes would be a much smarter and fiscally responsible investment if the concern is traffic.	Thank you for your comment. The I-94 corridor (Albertville to Monticello) is the state's busiest freight route and improvements will improve freight efficiency and safety. The use of dedicated transit lanes is a good alternative to consider, but would not likely work in this context given the limited amount of transit trips using this rural stretch of roadway now and into the future.
Brian C. Martinson, PhD	I-94 lane expansion	The proposed lane expansion project on I-94 between Albertville and Monticello is exactly the type of "capacity expansion" project envisioned in recent state legislation set to take effect on February 1, 2025. That legislation will require all such projects to be subjected to a project assessment as follows: "Project assessment. (a) Prior to inclusion of a capacity expansion project in the state transportation improvement program or a metropolitan transportation improvement program, the applicable entity must perform a capacity expansion impact assessment of the project. Following the assessment, the applicable entity must determine if the project conforms with: (1) the greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets under section 174.01, subdivision 3; and (2) the vehicle miles traveled reduction targets established in the statewide multimodal transportation plan under section 174.03, subdivision 1a. (b) If the applicable entity determines that the capacity expansion project is not in conformance with paragraph (a), the applicable entity must: (1) alter the scope or design of the project and perform a revised assessment that meets the requirements under this section; (2) interlink sufficient impact mitigation as provided in subdivision 4; or (3) halt project development and disallow inclusion of the project in the appropriate transportation improvement program." That legislation is part of a broader recognition of ongoing climate disruption, the role of our enormously car-dependent transportation system in contributing to climate disruption, and efforts at mitigating greenhouse gas emission effects in large part through reductions in vehicle miles traveled in single-occupancy motor vehicles. Such capacity expansion projects have been shown time and again, in location after location throughout the US, to "induce demand" for increased VMT through expanding provision of an expensive "public good" (the project budget is estimated to be over \$105,000,000 in state and federal funds). Thus, this project runs at cross-purposes with state efforts to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and their negative effects. Sadly, if this project is included in the TIP at this point in time, it will not be subjected to the assessment process required by this recent legislation, and there do not appear to be any other checks that would occur before construction begins. We are decades behind where we should be in responding to climate disruption. This project represents a continuation of "business as usual" by MNDOT, continuing the chasm between administrative practice and official state policy.	<p>Thank you for your comment. The two projects that are part of this TIP amendment are being amended at this time as they will be selecting a construction firm this winter with project starting spring 2024. In the case of the Scott County interchange, the project was planned so that construction would be finished and the project opened before an adjacent project starts construction in 2025. Due to the timing of these two projects, they are not subject to greenhouse gas emissions impact assessment law that goes into effect on February 1, 2025. Given the multi-year transportation project development process, this law was phased in to allow projects already being planned and programmed to be delivered. Delaying the projects would likely add millions of dollars to the total project costs due to construction inflation.</p> <p>However, the Met Council has several ongoing and future projects aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions via electrification and the reduction of vehicle miles travelled. We expect to use new greenhouse gas emission measures to aid in Regional Solicitation project selection in future funding cycles. The Council also has new federal funding sources, including the Carbon Reduction Program and PROTECT, aimed at reducing emissions and making the transportation system more resilient.</p>
Patricia Thompson	Both projects	This is climate change denialism. I am ashamed that my people who work for my state are hurrying to widen this highway before they are required by law to take climate effects into account. Do better.	<p>Thank you for your comment. The two projects that are part of this TIP amendment are being amended at this time as they will be selecting a construction firm this winter with the project starting spring 2024. In the case of the Scott County interchange, the project was planned so that construction would be finished and the project opened before an adjacent project starts construction in 2025. Due to the timing of these two projects, they are not subject to greenhouse gas emissions impact assessment law that goes into effect on February 1, 2025. Given the multi-year transportation project development process, this law was phased in to allow projects already being planned and programmed to be delivered. Delaying the projects would likely add millions of dollars to the total project costs due to construction inflation.</p> <p>However, the Met Council has several ongoing and future projects aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions via electrification and the reduction of vehicle miles travelled. We expect to use new greenhouse gas emission measures to aid in Regional Solicitation project selection in future funding cycles. The Council also has new federal funding sources, including the Carbon Reduction Program and PROTECT, aimed at reducing emissions and making the transportation system more resilient.</p>
Jack Kimbler	I-94 expansion	Routine maintenance of our highways is necessary, but the widening of I-94 from Monticello to Albertville is not a worthwhile investment. Currently there are several ways residents of the area can reach the Twin Cities besides I-94 such as US-10, Northstar Commuter Rail, and local roads. Widening I-94 might temporarily reduce traffic, but it will also induce demand by pulling traffic from other routes and modes. Together with population growth, this will result in traffic returning to pre-	Thank you for your comment. We agree that investing more in buses, trains, and protected bike lanes will provide many benefits for the region. However, these are not viable solutions to address the corridor needs for this I-94 project (Albertville to Monticello) given its context in Greater Minnesota.

Commenter	Topic	Comment	Response
		expansion levels. In addition it will create more traffic noise, pollution, and exasperate existing problems caused by car dependency.  We need better options for moving the masses. We should invest more in public transit like busses and trains which are designed to carry way more people more efficiently than personal automobiles. The Northstar Commuter Rail recently had more trains added to the schedule including the popular Vikings and Twins Game trains. Increasing frequency of Northstar will take hundreds of cars off I-94 and reduce congestion without expanding the highway, especially during rush hour. We need more frequent and reliable public transit and more ways of getting around besides personal automobiles such as protected bike lanes and frequent bus services.	
Alex Grill	Highway expansion	Why are we still expanding highway miles during a climate crisis? With commuting to the cities down so much because of the increase in teleworking, expanding trunk highways would only serve as excess capacity and further incentivize road transportation when we need to be lowering vehicle miles traveled. The counties and the met council should be subsidizing rail improvements to get trucks off the road and meaningful transit improvements to allow residents in these areas actual alternatives instead of more and more highway miles.	<p>Thank you for your comment. The I-94 project (Albertville to Monticello) was one of eight projects funded through the Corridors of Commerce program in 2023. This program was established through the State Legislature in 2013 to foster economic growth through state highway projects. Funding for the last round of Corridors of Commerce was authorized by the Legislature in 2021 and 2023, for a total of \$380 million. The legislation directs MnDOT to administer the program based on the criteria established by the Legislature and then deliver the selected projects.</p> <p>At the same time, the Legislature passed language requiring capacity expansion projects to conduct a greenhouse gas emissions impact assessment goes into effect for projects starting in early 2025. Given the multi-year transportation project development process, this law was phased in to allow projects already being planned and programmed to be delivered.</p> <p>The Met Council has several ongoing and future projects aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions via electrification and the reduction of vehicle miles travelled. We expect to use new greenhouse gas emission measures to aid in Regional Solicitation project selection in future funding cycles. The Council also has new federal funding sources, including the Carbon Reduction Program and PROTECT, aimed at reducing emissions and making the transportation system more resilient.</p>
Jessica Crowder	I-94 expansion and rail	My name is Jessica Crowder and I think that is a great idea to make the extension on I-94. Are there any future plans to get the monorail from Big Lake to Duluth, MN? That has been a project underway for some time now and needs to be completed. Thanks and have a great day Sir.	Thank you for your comment (Albertville to Monticello). We will relay your rail question to both the Minnesota Department of Transportation and Metro Transit.
Adam Nafstad, City of Albertville	I-94 expansion and rail	Improved Westbound access at CSAH 37 should be considered as part of the project. Currently, the westbound on-ramp to I94 includes a collector-distributor road and signalized intersection. This proposed I94 project should include extending the collector-distributor road which would allow CSAH 37 to access the freeway with improved safety and without signalization.	Thank you for your comment. We will relay it to the Minnesota Department of Transportation.
Brian Anderson	Both projects	I approve of both of these...especially the I-94 expansion.	Thank you for your comment. We acknowledge your support of the project.
Shurkey Swanke	I-94 expansion and miscellaneous	YES, expand I-94 by adding at least one lane each direction.  YES, add a grade-separated interchange on 169 at Highway 59.  RAISE ALL THE SPEED LIMITS in Minnesota by at least 25%, rounded-up to the nearest 5 mph increment. NO automated enforcement. NO ""Policing for Profit"" NO ""Civil Asset Forfeiture"" without a RELATED felony conviction.  NO MONEY FROM THE MOTOR-VEHICLE FUEL TAX spent on pedestrians or bicyclists. Let them pay for their infrastructure the way motor vehicle owner/operators have been for decades.  (Part of this comment was removed in compliance with Met Council guidelines to remove content that is vulgar, an implied or personal attack, or defamatory.)	We acknowledge your comment and support for the projects.
Mike Albers	I-94 expansion	<p>I am pleased to write a letter on behalf of the I-94 expansion project. I strongly support this project's inclusion to the Current Revenue Scenario of the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan Amendment. This project will expand I-94 between Albertville and Monticello, in Wright County, Minnesota, and will support the larger goal of decreasing travel time and accidents by providing an additional travel lane on I-94 from Maple Grove to St. Cloud.</p> <p>I-94 is a critical corridor that moves traffic across the upper Midwest, and in Minnesota links the Twin Cities Metropolitan area with the northern and western parts of the state. The ability of this artery to handle capacity efficiently and safely is key to Minnesota's vitality. The completion of the I-94 Expansion project</p>	Thank you for your comment.

Commenter	Topic	Comment	Response
		<p>from Albertville to Monticello is crucial for enhanced economic development, increased safety, improved quality of life, and increased freight mobility.</p> <p>The lane capacity expansion completion of Phase 1, from Rogers to St. Michael, has resulted in a 55% reduction in travel delay time through this stretch of road, close to 3 million square feet of new industrial development, and approximately \$6.2 million in annual property tax increase. We expect the Albertville to Monticello project to produce similar results.</p> <p>This project is one of the last steps in completing the six-lane freeway expansion west of the Twin Cities. The project will provide lane continuity between recently completed projects east of Albertville and west of Monticello.</p> <p>This I-94 “gap” project is of vital importance to our area and one I am proud to support it being added to the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan’s Current Revenue Scenario. Thank you for your consideration.</p>	
Matthew Leonard	I-94 expansion	Identical to comment in above row.	Identical response to above row.
Jason Groth	I-94 expansion	Identical to comment two rows above.	Identical response to two rows above.
Brett Ahrens	I-94 expansion	Identical to comment three rows above.	Identical response to three rows above.
Tama Theis	I-94 expansion	Identical to comment four rows above.	Identical response to four rows above.
Alecia Valenti	I-94 expansion	<p>MnDOT and the Met Council have adopted several plans and policies in support of VMT reduction and generally reducing reliance on private automobiles to achieve, in turn, a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. I'm disappointed to see a proposal for expanding I-94, which will likely induce demand for driving, thereby increasing VMT &amp; transportation-based GHG emissions in direct opposition to the agencies' stated climate goals. Time after time, studies have shown lane expansions just lead to more driving, more congestion, and more pollution. I hope this request will be denied to show MnDOT and the Met Council's commitment to making hard decisions to work toward our climate change mitigation goals. Such decisions may not be politically popular, but are critical to our future as we keep experiencing the hottest year on record.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. The I-94 project (Albertville to Monticello) was one of eight projects funded through the Corridors of Commerce program in 2023. This program was established through the State Legislature in 2013 to foster economic growth through state highway projects. Funding for the last round of Corridors of Commerce was authorized by the Legislature in 2021 and 2023, for a total of \$380 million. The legislation directs MnDOT to administer the program based on the criteria established by the Legislature and then deliver the selected projects.</p> <p>At the same time, the Legislature passed language requiring capacity expansion projects to conduct a greenhouse gas emissions impact assessment goes into effect for projects starting in early 2025. Given the multi-year transportation project development process, this law was phased in to allow projects already being planned and programmed to be delivered.</p> <p>The Met Council has several ongoing and future projects aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions via electrification and the reduction of vehicle miles travelled. We expect to use new greenhouse gas emission measures to aid in Regional Solicitation project selection in future funding cycles. The Council also has new federal funding sources, including the Carbon Reduction Program and PROTECT, aimed at reducing emissions and making the transportation system more resilient.</p>
Brit Anbacht	I-94 expansion	Identical to comment in above row.	Identical response to above row.
Zachary Wajda, N4MN	I-94 expansion	Identical to comment two rows above.	Identical response to two rows above.
Ian Gaida	I-94 expansion	I would much rather see the Northstar extended to St Cloud instead	Thank you for your comment. As discussed in other responses, the I-94 project was funded through a program established through the State Legislature. We will pass your comment on to Metro Transit.
Zack Mensinger	Both projects	I strongly oppose both of these amendments. Both of these projects will only serve to induce more driving and traffic in the region, promoting sprawl in ex-urban areas instead of more financially and environmentally friendly development in existing neighborhoods. They spend huge amounts of money to simply further trap us in a cycle of car-dependency and more decades of increasing VMT and pollution. They go against so many existing policies and goals of both our region and state.	Thank you for your comment.





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390 Robert Street North  
St Paul, MN 55101-1805

651-602-1000  
TTY 651-291-0904  
[public.info@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:public.info@metc.state.mn.us)  
[metro council.org](http://metro council.org)

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